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FIGURES THAT MATTER

GST mop-up hits 5-month high in Sept at ₹1.17 lakh cr

Diesel price raised by 30 paise, taking it to ₹97.84 in Mumbai

Petrol prices go past ₹100 per litre in most cities after a 25 paise per litre hike

₹113.73 Price of petrol in Sri Ganganagar, Rajasthan

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THIS MASSIVE SOLAR PARK AT PAVAGADA UPS HEAT

CHETANA BELAGERE, ASHWINI M SRIPAD @ Pavagada

IT is a large sheet of glass that stretches as far as the eye can see. Acres and acres of black solar panels, spread across 12,800 acres to be precise, glimmer in the Sun, making the solar park at Pavagada taluk in Tumakuru district one of the biggest in Asia.

Launched in 2018, this alternative energy facility was meant to be the answer to environmentally hazardous thermal and nuclear power energy sources. But this ultra-modern, eco-friendly solution has brought misery to villagers nearby.

The New Indian Express visited the surrounding villages to understand how their lives have changed since the solar park came up about four-and-a-half years ago.

The common complaint is the noticeable change in temperature.

"Pavagada is hot, but the heat is even more unbearable now.

SOLAR PARK FLARES
PART – I

We don't know whether it is because of the solar park. But definitely, our nights have become warmer even during winters. Days are burning hot in summer," said residents of the Dalit Colony at Vallur.

The Solar Park spreads across 12,800 acres at Pavagada in Tumakuru district. It is said to be one of the largest photovoltaic solar parks in the world | ASHISHKRISHNA HP

Vallur is one of the five villages -- Tirumani, Balasamudram, Kyatagancharulu and Rayacharulu -- where the Karnataka Solar Power Development Corporation Ltd (KSPDCL) leased land from farmers to set up Shakti Sthala, which was the biggest solar park in the world in 2018.

"Earlier, we used to sleep outside only during summer. But now we do it in all seasons," said Narayanappa, a villager. KSPDCL was supposed to plant trees but nothing has been done, he added.

The villagers complained that the temperature has gone up at least by 5 degrees Celsius (from around 32 degrees Celsius to 37 degrees Celsius). But researchers and scientists, who have visited the place, said the increase is marginal at around 0.5 to 1 degree Celsius in areas located close to the panels.

Srinivas Reddy, a former director of the Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre and Senior Consultant at the Disaster Management Authority, said the authorities should install temperature sensor at 1, 3 and 5 km radius from the solar park site to gather better data. CONTINUED ON: P9

India walks the retaliatory quarantine talk

Impose it on UK nationals entering country as Britain yet to recognise Indian vax report

PUSHKAR BANAKAR @ New Delhi

AFTER warning Britain that its failure to recognise Indian vaccine certificates could lead to reciprocal action, India on Friday walked its talk, imposing mandatory quarantine on visiting UK nationals.

According to the new guidelines that will come into effect from Monday (October 4), UK nationals, irrespective of their vaccination status, must take a pre-departure RT-PCR test within 72 hours of travel; a Covid test upon arrival at any airport in the country; and a test on the eighth day of their arrival. "UK nationals will also have to undergo quarantine at home or in the destination address for 10 days after arrival in India," sources said.

Authorities in the Union health ministry and the ministry of civil aviation have been tasked with implementing the new measures.

The decision comes weeks after Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla called out the UK's travel guidelines that imposed mandatory quarantine from October 4 on even double-jabbed fliers from countries that were not on its approved list, including India. He said they were discriminatory, adding New Delhi could impose reciprocal measures for British travellers if the UK did not recognise vaccine certificates issued by the National Health Authority's CoWin app.

Trouble emerged when initially Britain did not include Serum Institute of India-manufactured Covishield on its list of approved vaccines. Days later after uproar, the vaccine, which was developed by University of Oxford and pharma giant AstraZeneca, was added to the UK list of approved vaccines.

However, the UK government said arrivals from India would still need to undergo mandatory quarantine as there were issues with the vaccine certificates being issued. British High Commissioner to India Alex Ellis subsequently held a meeting with National Health Authority Chief Executive Officer R S Sharma and said neither side has any technical issues with the vaccine certificates. Yet, the matter remains unresolved.

KARNATAKA	SEPT 30	OCT 01
Fresh cases	933	589
Recoveries	704	887
Deaths	14	13

SWACHH SATYAGRAHA

The 27-foot statue of Mahatma Gandhi, installed between Vikasa Soudha and Vidhana Soudha, gets spruced up ahead of the 152nd birth anniversary of the Father of the Nation, in Bengaluru on Friday | VINOD KUMAR T

Navy team caught in avalanche, 5 missing

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Dehradun

FIVE mountaineers of the Indian Navy went missing in Uttarakhand on Friday after they were hit by an avalanche on Friday morning. Five out of the 10-member group were later rescued. They were on their way to the peak of Mount Trishul in Bageshwar district when an avalanche hit them. A joint team of the Army, Air Force and State Disaster Response Force are looking for the missing personnel, the Navy said in a statement.

Mountaineers from the Nehru Institute of Mountaineering (NIM) Uttarkashi are also helping with ground search. Amit Bisht, dean of NIM, said, "The team members were on the last leg of the expedition when they were hit by the avalanche at around 5 am on Friday. A six-member team from NIM has joined the search and rescue operations."

Tatas top bidder for Air India, no govt word yet

ANURADHA SHUKLA @ New Delhi

TATA Sons is set to take over Air India as it has emerged the top bidder for the debt-laden state carrier. An official announcement will be made after the Union cabinet clears the deal, sources said.

"The government received all the bids on the last day for accepting bids — September 15. Tata Sons proposed the highest price to take over the airline. After the Cabinet nod is obtained, an announcement will be made," a senior finance ministry official told this paper.

The official, however, refused to divulge any details about the exact bidding amount except that "it is substantial".

Apart from the Tata Group, SpiceJet chairman and MD Ajay Singh had also placed financial bids for the airline in his personal capacity.

After the news of Tatas winning the bid broke, the finance ministry issued a clarification. "Media reports indicating approval of financial bids by Government of India in the AI disinvestment case are incorrect. Media will be informed of the Government decision as and when it is taken," said Tuhin Kanta Pandey, Secretary, Department of Investment and Public Asset Management.

Senior officials in the know of the process claim that one of the reasons why the government did not want to come clean on the issue is because the Tata Group had proposed to acquire around 15% of the airline's total debt with certain conditions relaxed, which needs top level negotiation.

Air India had accumulated losses of ₹70,820 crore as on March 31, 2020, according to the latest available numbers.

The government wants to divest its 76% stake in Air India, which is crucial to achieve the Budget target of raising ₹1.75 lakh crore from divestment.

ADOPTIVE PARENTS' WOE

SC notice to Centre on city lawyer's PIL

CHETANA BELAGERE @ Bengaluru

A petition by a Bengaluru-based corporate lawyer and mother of two adopted children, who has questioned the maternity policy of the Central government that discriminates against adoptive mothers, led the Supreme Court to issue a notice to the Centre on Friday.

In her public interest litigation (Hamsaanandini Nanduri Vs Union of India), she has challenged a provision of the Maternity Benefit Act which says adoptive mothers are eligible for maternity leave only if they adopted children are below three months old. She has also objected to the period of maternity leave as an adoptive mother gets 12 weeks, while a biological mother is granted 26 weeks.

Hamsaanandini, who launched a campaign on change.org a few days ago and got signatures of 28,506, said, "I am grateful to the honourable court for seeing merit." P9

EXPRESS READ

After talks with CM, Panchamsalis not to protest, for now

Bengaluru: Panchamsali-Lingayats, who were threatening to launch another protest to seek reservation for their community, have decided to wait and watch for now, after Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai assured them that the matter would be taken up after the Backward Classes Commission submits its report | P6

MAKING HISTORY

5 girl jockeys to race at Kambala this year

Chaitra Bhat from Kundapur, who will be one of the five girls to race at Kambala this year, helps with race preparations at Miyyar last year | SHRIRAM BN

DIVYA CUTINHO @ Mangaluru

ONE more male bastion conquered. This season, five girls from Dakshina Kannada district will be trained to participate in the high-adrenaline, physically demanding Kambala race, which has till now remained a male-dominated sport.

Breaking the tradition, the Kambala Academy has allowed them to be Kambala jockeys, who will be steering their buffaloes through slushy tracks.

Once the training of male participants is completed, separate sessions will be held for the five girls.

"When I decided to include women, I got a threat. Why should we not give opportunities to women when they themselves are interested? Their parents too have agreed. They will be trained at least for five days and they will participate with buffaloes raised at their homes. Despite opposition, we will hold a special Kambala exclusively for these girls at Moodbidri this season. In the coming days, more women will come forward. Already, women are allowed in Yakshagana, which had for a long time remained male-only at form," said Gunapal Kadamba, convener of Kambala Conservation, Monitoring and Training Academy.

He said that women Kambala enthusiasts will also be allowed to commentate and bring buffaloes to the starting point of the track. CONTINUED ON: P9